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Greetings,

Hope that your New Year is off to a good start. The mild weather has made it nice for getting outdoor work done. I know of several small logging operations that can still access timber without fighting four feet of snow like some January's. There's still plenty of winter left so let's hope we get the snow we need before spring.

Some of the topics that we have covered in the past will also be found in this year's bulletin.

In February we will let you know if any pending legislation has been introduced at the New Mexico Legislature that will have an impact on forest landowners. There has been talk of changes to the NM estate tax which could impact landowners. The Legislature is in session from 1/19-thru 2/19. We will let you know in time, of any legislation of interest, in case you would like to write or e-mail your legislator with an opinion. Last year several Tree Farmers contacted their legislators after we wrote of HB 521 which would have placed burdensome and unnecessary new regulations on private timber harvests.

We will let you know what issues the national Tree Farm staff is tracking on Capitol Hill that impact Tree Farmers. Several major issues such as climate legislation can potentially have a major impact on forest landowners. Being an advocate for the 95,000 Tree Farmers nationwide is a central role for our national staff.

We will update you on the Tree Farm certification program. This certifies that any wood product sold from your forest is certified as having been grown and harvested sustainably. This has not been a big deal here in New Mexico since very few Tree Farmers are currently harvesting wood products. It is however a major accomplishment for the American Tree Farm System to have achieved this. As wood product markets improve, locally and nationally, the "certified sustainable" label may be used to market your products and give them a competitive edge.

We will be announcing our fall field day at the winner of the Tree Farmer of the Year award. This award goes to the Tree Farmer who best exemplifies the practice of long-term forest management. Last year's winner was The Chaparral Girl Scout Camp in the Jemez Mountains. The weather cooperated and we had a nice tour of this 1,000 acre property in October.

Contact us if you have any questions or comments.

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How much wilderness area is there in the United States and where is it primarily located? To answer this question we must first identify what constitutes a “wilderness” area. According to the wilderness act of 1964, “wilderness is recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor, who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions...” The passage of the Wilderness Act of 1964 created the National Wilderness Preservation System. Initially this system contained 54 wilderness areas containing 9 million acres of federal land. This act gave authority to congress to designate wilderness areas and charged the secretaries of the interior and agriculture with studying and recommending lands with wilderness potential. In 1980 congress passed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). With this over 56 million acres were added to the wilderness designation and marked the single most addition in United States history. Each session congress continues to review and add wilderness areas. As recent as March 30, 2009 President Obama signed the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 designating 52 new wilderness areas and added acreage to 26 existing areas. This new addition totaled more than 2 million acres. Today there are over 756 wilderness areas totaling more than 109,492,591 acres in 44 states and includes land in US territories such as Puerto Rico. They range in size from just 6 acres to 9,078,675 acres. These lands are managed by four agencies which include Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Forest Service. The Federal government owns approximately 29% of the land in the US with proportions varying in each state. More than 17% of all federal land and 5% of all land in the US is designated wilderness. Interestingly because of its size Alaska contains approximately 53% of all federal land designated as wilderness making up about 16% of the total land areas in Alaska. In comparison only 3% of all other wilderness is located outside of Alaska, primarily located west of the Rocky Mountains. To view maps and information on all US wilderness visit www.wilderness.net and click on find a wilderness.

References

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